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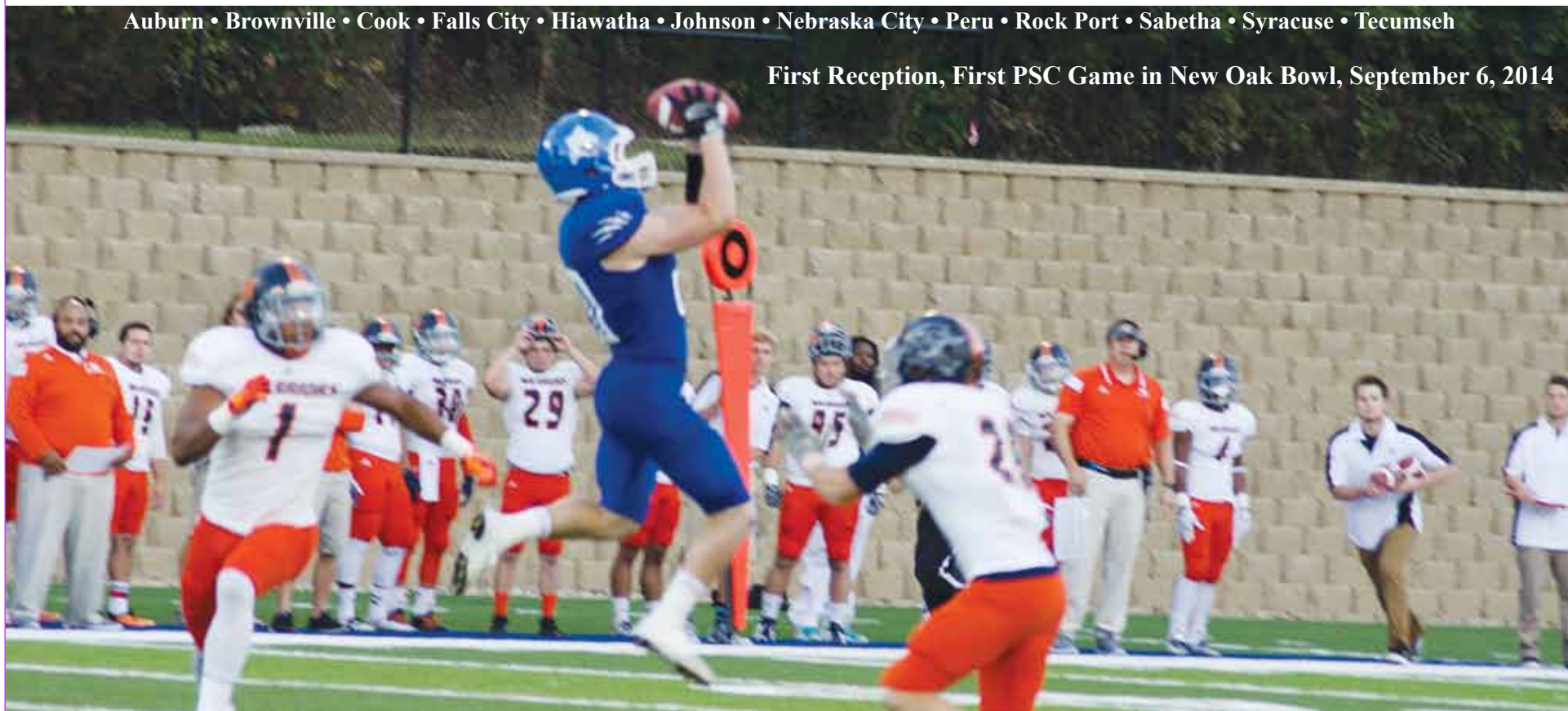
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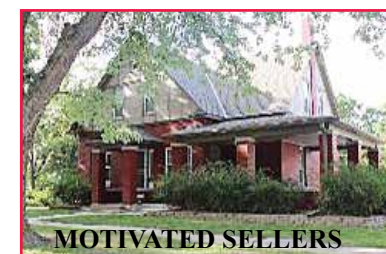
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Voices

from the Valleys of the Nemaha
Photographer & Publisher, Stephen Hassler

Writers This Month

Devon Adams
Carol Carpenter
Mary Ann Holland
Merri Johnson
Lee Nyberg
Marilyn Woerth

Thank You

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P036333 10/03

Where Life Is Good

Marilyn Woerth

I was on a mission, but rain was predicted. Maybe it wouldn't rain all day long. All I needed was a few hours, and cloudy skies were preferable to full out sunshine. The morning was grey, and a cold, light shower soured my mood, but the afternoon brought a break with predictions of a full onslaught by evening.

Taking advantage of the break in the rain, I grabbed my camera and headed out to the cemetery on the hill. I needed some pictures for an article I was writing for a newsletter. Once at the cemetery I realized I had the wrong lens on my camera. All my lenses were in a backpack type bag on my back, so I headed for a small uphill incline with a stone wall at the top.

After sitting on the wall and changing my lens out, I get up and start walking down the wet incline. My left foot touches the grass and goes forward and forward and forward. My first instinct was to get the camera out of harm's way. It's expensive, so my arm shoots straight up. Then my right foot oddly doesn't move, (I have two artificial knees) my body leans backward bending my right knee like it hasn't been bent in four years. "Dang", was my first thought, "this is not going to end well, I'm going to break my leg, oh well maybe it will break some scar tissue from the knee surgery." I hope!

As my back kept falling backwards towards the ground, I felt something. Oh no, my head just hit the stone wall behind me. This really is not going to turn out well. Then frump, I was on the ground. Alive-check, broken bones-no, sprains-no, bashed in head-no, sore-yes, very, headache-yes, scar tissue broke-too early to tell. Sitting still for a few minutes, the thought does come to me looking around that was I lucky. For once in my life I was thrilled to be short. If I had been a few inches taller, who knows what would've happened. As it was, my head must've bumped the top edge and slid off. Chilling thought that no one would've known about my accident for half a day or more.

I wondered if some might think that the occupants of the cemetery were giving me a warning. Now I'm not usually the superstitious type and I don't believe in ghosts, but hey, after a fall like that I was going to hedge my bets. "Hi, my name is Marilyn," as I run my hand across a headstone. "I'm here to take a few pictures and to tell a story, so if you can help me out that would be great. Oh, and someday I will be your neighbor. Over that way, but not just yet." As I pat another stone, "Okay?" A gust of wind blew.

With a limp in my step, I gathered my camera and pursued my original mission, with not so much zest. Thinking along the way, what if I had died? What would the gossip in the county be? What would the headlines be? "Death by Cemetery". Would they expect foul play? Probably not! Camera, wet grass, nope, just a silly accident.

Today I'm out enjoying the sunshine, still sore after ten days, but alive, where life is good. Happy Halloween!

This Halloween Watch Out For Trick-or-Treaters



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Oak Bowl, September 6, 2014

Poetry by Devon Adams

WINGS ON THE WIND

Huge wings cut the air in lofty spiral circles, as somber buzzards gather. Power lines sag with busy birds gossiping, and velvet Monarchs flutter through. Swift barn swallows check out well before the frost, as shortened sunshine makes chilly dawns and dusks. Foggy river valleys fill with the poignant cries of geese and ducks following the ancient maps of their ancestors, their eerie voices calling from the night into the day. From the edges, mourning doves say goodbye, and floating cranes speak in echoes from the vault of heaven.

SPEED BUMPS

Here we are, hustling down the street, when the bump thump startles us out of our reverie. It is a reminder to pay attention to the seconds of each day, as we race to get things done, to finish our list, to ignore moments that will never happen again. Even in the midst of tragedy, we are surrounded by grace and beauty, waiting for us to know that they are there.

SPIRITS IN SMOKE

Curling like a snake ballet, coils of smoke rise in cold, still air. The ghosts of trees tell stories in the embers, and in the sinuous braids that weave high above the fire. The wood remembers, even as it's spirit flies away.

RED FIRE

The far, dark hill was outlined faintly, as it crouched under the night weight of an infinite sky. Then there was a fire burning on the hill. Swelling like a hot balloon, the moon lifted into the the sky and hovered there, it's alien presence glowing red.

FIREWOOD

They are waiting, those who no longer stand so tall and straight. Death has come from the age of their worn-out lives, or from untimely disease, or from the blast of storms. But their energy will persist, in the rot of new soil, or in the fires on a hearth. No need to cut the green wood tree, with all these volunteers They can be fire, and change a cold, damp house into a warm cocoon.

CRISP AND CRUNCHY

The last bright leaves are hitching rides on a chilly autumn breeze, riding the wind, until they land softly. As they look up, the bright sky is etched with barren branches, like bony fingers. Then a lonesome walker, wearing heavy boots, strides through the trees, crushing a crunchy path, leaving tattered crumbs. The loamy soil welcomes the new mulch, as scattered clouds gather into winter.

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Devon Adams

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Bring along your Medicare card and a list of the prescription drugs you take.

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Oct. 18	Nebraska City	Moser's U-Save	1821 S. 11 th Street	9:00-2:30	402-269-2301
Oct. 21	Pawnee City	Pawnee Co. Extension	Courthouse	9:30-4:00	402-852-2970
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Oct. 23	Auburn	Auburn Library	1810 Courthouse Ave.	10:00-4:30	402-274-4755
Oct. 28	Tecumseh	Ridgeview Towers	1143 N. 3rd Street	9:00-4:30	402-335-3669
Oct. 29	Sterling	First National Bank	140 Broadway	9:00-3:30	402-866-2050
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Nov. 4	Syracuse	Otoe Co. Extension	180 Chestnut	9:00-4:00	402-269-2301
Nov. 5	Weeping Water	Cass Co. Extension	8400 144 th St., Ste. 100	9:00-4:30	402-267-2205
Nov. 6	Nebraska City	Moser's U-Save	1821 S. 11 th Street	9:00-5:00	402-269-2301
Nov. 11	Nebraska City	The Ambassador	1800 14 th Avenue	9:00-4:30	402-269-2301
Nov. 12	Auburn	Auburn Library	1810 Courthouse Ave.	10:00-4:30	402-274-4755
Nov. 13	Pawnee City	Pawnee Co. Extension	Courthouse	9:30-4:00	402-852-2970
Nov. 18	Plattsmouth	Plattsmouth Library	400 Ave. A	9:00-4:30	402-267-2205
Nov. 19	Tecumseh	Ridgeview Towers	1143 N. 3rd Street	9:00-4:30	402-335-3669
Nov. 20	Weeping Water	Cass Co. Extension	8400 144 th St., Ste. 100	9:00-4:30	402-267-2205
Nov. 24	Nebraska City	The Ambassador	1800 14 th Avenue	9:00-4:30	402-269-2301
Nov. 25	Palmyra	Palmyra Senior Ctr.	425 C Street	9:00-4:00	402-780-5606
Dec. 2	Auburn	Auburn Library	1810 Courthouse Ave.	10:00-4:30	402-274-4755
Dec. 3	Syracuse	Otoe Co. Extension	180 Chestnut	9:00-4:00	402-269-2301
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Cotinued from page 6

convenient can. But they had the sense to wear clothing that covered essentially their entire bodies. Yours truly, on the other hand, didn't have either the sense to wear long pants or apply the insect repellent we had along. Nope. I sat around the campfire for two and a half hours, star-gazing with my sweetheart, blissfully unaware of the feast my capri-length pants were offering up to all the insects in the campground. Two days later, I awoke scratching approximately two dozen bug bites that had appeared between the knees and ankles of both legs. At first I thought mosquitoes, but judging by the discomfort and extreme redness, I'm changing my diagnosis to chiggers. Hubby has refrained from ridiculing my idiocy, but it's a safe bet he's enjoying not being the entire "inspiration" for this column.

Despite the hassle of dragging a pick-up bed's worth of gear for a one-night campout, enduring the bug bites, and the tossing and turning, I'm glad we made the effort. The view of the night sky, the hooting of barred owls and the yipping of coyotes are so much more "real" when you experience them outside city limits. If you haven't been camping, I encourage you to try it. There just might be a cowboy in your genes.



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Alzheimer's Affects Us All



Unstoppable: A Parkinson's Journey

By Lee Nyberg

A comic said this about attitude: a bad attitude is like a flat tire—if you don't change it you'll never go anywhere." Sherwin and Betty Terrill are definitely going places. This winter, they are heading to Tennessee to see Betty's 97-year old dad, then to friends in Charleston, and on to Florida for pre-dawn beach-combing. Parkinson's is not stopping them. They've been facing challenges together since they were new parents in Hawaii in the early 1960's. Even though most of us tend to think of Hawaii as paradise, it was no piece of cake; Sherwin and Betty will tell you it taught them a life lesson and shaped their journey: Make the best of the your situation.

Parkinson's disease was never on their itinerary. In 1998, when Sherwin was diagnosed, they didn't know anyone who had the disease. Or how Sherwin's finger twitch could be more than a pinched nerve. Or that the man who had sung in church and in a quartet could no longer reach the high notes for his tenor part or keep his voice strong because of a chronic illness.

Life Lessons #2--Prepare for living with Parkinson's disease and #3: If you're in denial, you haven't gone through the grief process--give you a hint of the tough times and decisions they've weathered in the last 15 years since Sherwin's diagnosis. They have worked hard to accept the reality of an altered present and future. Sherwin cautions people not to be too attached to their houses because, "you might be able to live better if you live differently." The Terrills moved to Omaha about 5 years ago, to be near family. Their determination to find a place that would permit long-term mobility for Sherwin meant they spent more than planned. This was a conscious decision; they knew they would travel less than in their pre-PD vision of retirement.

Sherwin's PD has not stopped his creative and mathematical mind. When the new house's deck needed rebuilding, two contractors could not come up with a plan at reasonable labor costs. Applying Life Lesson #4: Be patient with yourself and your changing abilities, Sherwin knew it might take him longer to solve, but he could still do it. He and his sons rebuilt the deck and reused the materials to build an arbor. He's also built a beautiful curved bridge over a stream, which runs through his back yard. His workshop says "living," not "Parkinson's." Even though he admits his PD makes him stiffer and slower, he has adapted to continue what he enjoys. Modified equipment on wheels with brakes and new techniques such as using the grooves of his saw to steady his hands, keep him woodworking and safe.

Early in their Parkinson's journey, Betty and Sherwin learned his symptoms vary over the course of the day—sometimes Sherwin could do things and others he could not. Sherwin says it is best to ask if a person with PD needs help, because they may not need it, or may need it in a specific way. Ask for help, for the big and small, is Life Lesson #5. Some people avoid support groups because they think they don't need help. Betty and Sherwin formed one, which meets in their accessible house, to give others a nearby place for problem solving, sharing information, and fellowship.

Lou Holtz (football coach), Abe Lincoln (preserver of the Union), and DaVinci (artist)

Continued on page 9 >>>>>




Is that TJ??




Blair's marching band always impresses at Applejack.

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to name a few, have written about the importance of keeping a positive attitude. Sherwin and Betty know what all those people knew. When Sherwin's doctor gave him a 90% certainty of Parkinson's, he also handed him a stack of reading. Sherwin had this to say of the grim pile, "after reading a few of the examples of the worst cases of PD, I thought 'I don't think I'm gonna read anymore.'" Thus, we come to Life Lesson #6: Don't "horribilize" or get too hung up on yourself; normal people have problems, too.

Life Lesson #7: life goes on; focus on what you can change and don't worry about the future, was not the easiest thing for Betty to learn. A natural planner and former Human Resources executive, she worried at first at how they would manage and what was ahead. Sherwin respects her need to know more, while at the same time Betty relies on his positive attitude and wish to "enjoy the day." Betty believes, "we can miss a lot of life when we are always thinking about tomorrow."

The Terrills are deeply spiritual and focus on living in the present, being grateful, and enjoying each moment. Betty reads "Jesus Calling," by Sarah Young, and meditates. She reads the Bible to Sherwin when he cannot keep it steady. Sherwin underscores his faith by saying, "I know bad things happen. Where would our faith be without challenges of life? If He wants to take away challenges, I've learned enough. The Lord will be with us. We can choose to enjoy the day." Betty wrote this for her grandchildren, "Christmas is everyday, in our hearts. Be awed by [Christ's] presence. The Lord is working in you. Disappointments in life can lead to a deeper understanding of the Lord."

Sherwin understands balance, too, as he expressed in Life Lesson #8: Try not to get too upset when you're physically at the bottom; you'll see a higher swing. While he focuses on the upside, I heard frustration in his voice when Sherwin described the difficulties he sometimes has with eating and reading. He carefully manages his medications, using an alarm reminder. He knows how medications affect him, sometimes waking at 2 in the morning to take them so his system will be ready for getting up. One of Sherwin's key challenges with PD is his gradually shrinking "on-time;" he's hoping for true delayed release medications. Sherwin actively focuses his mind elsewhere, knowing he is better when he is not thinking about his symptoms. His wood-working activities are joined by Internet research (he's the "go to guy" for his type of Parkinson's), genealogical research, and a lot of exercise. In good weather, when not gardening or playing Bocce Ball, Sherwin might be riding his recumbent bike, which has been upgraded to go up hills.

Betty has great advice for us all: "Relax more, don't wait to do the things you want to do, such as a trip to Alaska, and be honest with each other." She used to worry about Sherwin driving. When he had trouble staying awake while driving, he gave it up, knowing he was a danger to himself and others. Selling his truck was very hard. Now she drives and he navigates. Their roles for handling finances have changed, too. They discuss decisions because Betty depends on Sherwin's wisdom.

Thomas Jefferson wisely said, "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." Sherwin closed our interview with this: "Remember in living with Parkinson's, 'living' comes first."

Lee Nyberg was uplifted by her interview with the Terrills and deeply touched by their fortitude and faith. She is proud to serve her community and her clients through her senior care company, Home Care Assistance. She can be reached via the "contact us" link at www.HomeCareAssistanceOmaha.com.

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 - Living History Presentations
 - Vintage Car Show on Sunday
 - Little Gobblers Run
 - Turkey Trot Fun Run
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Monarchs were noticed migrating during late September.

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now press your fingers on
their awaiting throats
and slide your rosined
bow across their strings

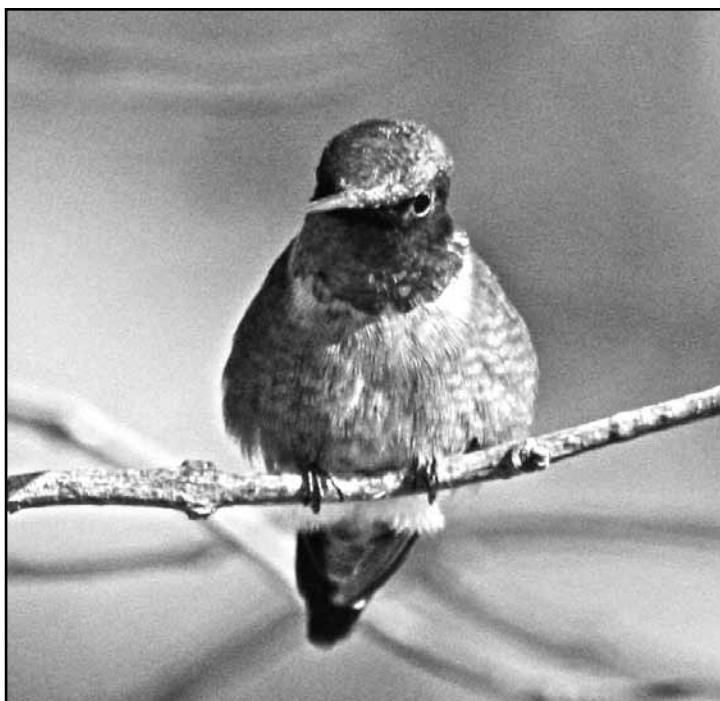
Hedge Apples

In my backyard rests
a pyramid of hedge apples
pitched from an Osage orange tree
strewn like Bacci balls
across the brown grass

The chartreuse monolith rises
a Mayan temple for ants
the reverent cathedral of
a fretfully bored husband
or dreadfully organized squirrels



Poetry & Photography by Carol Carpenter



Hummingbirds

Two male ruby throated hummingbirds
dance up and down around the feeder
flashing their iridescent scarlet throats
swooping and swirling in the tall lilac bush
at the edge of the deck.

I stand in front of the window
mesmerized and amazed,
at their spectacular agility and flight,
at their sparkling emerald and ruby feathers,
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